DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 333 623 EC 300 374

AUTHOR Duran, Elva
TITLE Functional Language Instruction for Linguistically Different Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities. ERIC Digest #E501.
INSTITUTION Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va.; ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children, Reston, Va.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Educational Research and Improvement (ED), Washington, DC.
REPORT NO EDO-EC-91-6
PUB DATE May 91
CONTRACT RI88062007
NOTE 3p.; Based on an article by Elva Duran, "Functional Language Instruction for the Handicapped or Linguistically Different Students," Journal of Reading Improvement, Vol. 25, no. 4 (1988), p.265-268.
AVAILABLE FROM Council for Exceptional Children, 1920 Association Dr., Reston, VA 22091-1589 ($1.00 each, minimum order $5.00 prepaid).
PUB TYPE Information Analyses - ERIC Clearinghouse Products (071)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Cultural Differences; *Disabilities; Elementary Secondary Education; Instructional Effectiveness; Language Acquisition; *Limited English Speaking; *Second Language Instruction; Severe Disabilities; Spanish Speaking; Teaching Methods
IDENTIFIERS ERIC Digests; *Functional Context

ABSTRACT

This digest explains how functional language instruction can be made useful for persons with moderate to severe disabilities who are also culturally and linguistically different. It further explains how vocabulary and cultural information of the Spanish-speaking student can be included in functional language instruction for students who are from different cultural groups. The digest defines functional language instruction, outlines use of an ecological inventory to determine language needs, offers a classroom example, describes how to choose vocabulary for functional language instruction, and notes the importance of continuing parent-school communication. The digest concludes that children who receive functional and context-embedded language instruction are more likely to have a positive attitude about learning and a heightened self-concept. (Six references) (JDD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED333623

ERIC Clearinghouse on Handicapped and Gifted Children
1920 Association Drive • Reston, VA 22091-1589
FAX (703) 264-9494

ERIC Digest

9

MAY 1991 EDO-EC-91-6

#E501

FUNCTIONAL LANGUAGE INSTRUCTION FOR LINGUISTICALLY DIFFERENT STUDENTS WITH MODERATE TO SEVERE DISABILITIES

Elva Durán

This digest explains how functional language instruction can be made useful for persons with moderate to severe disabilities who are also culturally and linguistically different. It further explains how vocabulary and cultural information of the Spanish-speaking student can be included in functional language instruction for students who are from different cultural groups.

What Is Functional Language Instruction?

In functional language instruction, the student is taught material that he or she can use in everyday life. In order for the material to be functional it must be useful to the student in many different environments (Brown et al., 1984). Thus, the words students learn at school must be useful at home and in other settings. One way to discover useful words is by using an ecological inventory.

Using an Ecological Inventory to Determine Language Needs

Brown and colleagues (1984) noted that an ecological inventory can determine the words children need to know for more effective functioning at home, at school, and in the community. An ecological inventory is a detailed listing by parents or caregivers of activities the student enjoys participating in. The ecological inventory will reveal the vocabulary that the teacher and parents should include in instructional activities. By getting information regularly from the home environment, the teacher can better decide what to emphasize in the classroom. Too often parents are left out of the student's instruction because teachers and other caregivers do not take the time to ask them what they feel their children need to learn.

The ecological inventory should include a section that seeks information about important cultural events that the family enjoys together. Often children who come to school from culturally and linguistically different families do not participate as fully as they might because the families have not been encouraged to explain what matters to them and their children culturally. Parents can be asked to share traditional legends, stories, and songs that are enjoyed by their children. These materials can then be incorporated into the language instruction program. In addition, parents may be invited to come to school to share in a wide variety of cultural events.

A Classroom Example

Songs can provide functional language activities for students in a variety of settings. If students have some verbal skills, they can sing some of the words or phrases from songs. If they are nonverbal, they can participate by pointing to photographs or pictures of some of the key words as they listen to other children sing. Students can also be helped to follow what is being said by learning to "sign" the important concepts or vocabulary from stories and songs. Another example might be a class discussion of holidays in which each child brings a item pertaining to a personally important holiday or event. A section of the room might be set aside for a holiday "museum," with each item labeled in English and the home language.

It is important to share what is being done in the classroom with parents so that they can carry over the activities at home. If this is not done, students will not learn to generalize information from one setting to another and language acquisition will be slower. Generalization training in language instruction is crucial if information taught in one environment is to be used functionally (Sailor & Guess, 1983).

Choosing Vocabulary for Functional Language Instruction

When determining what particular vocabulary should be taught to students who are from culturally or linguistically different groups, it is important to ask parents and other caregivers what words the student needs to know. Vocabulary related to particular foods, celebrations, or other culturally unique events are particularly good choices. The ecological inventory can be used to list appropriate vocabulary to incorporate into individualized language instruction programs. For example, in many Hispanic homes the student may eat "tortillas," "fajitas," and "enchiladas." These vocabulary words can be added to a list containing English words for other familiar foods such as chicken and bananas. Matching vocabulary to actual foods or pictures of food can be an effective way of helping children learn words that are familiar to their experience. Cueing can be done in both English and the home language. It is most effective to use both languages with students whose home language is different from the primary language of instruction used at school (Duran & Heiry, 1986).

EC 300374

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Continuing Parent-School Communication

It is desirable to ask parents for additional vocabulary to add to the language program periodically. Regularly scheduled parent conferences provide ideal occasions for gathering this input. It is important to add new vocabulary that is timely and relevant to the student's day-to-day activities.

Effectiveness of Functional Language Instruction

Children who receive functional and context-embedded language instruction are more likely to have a positive attitude about learning and a heightened self-concept. There is a positive correlation between self-concept and academic achievement (Gay, 1966; Lumpkin, 1959). Furthermore, by using elements of students' cultures to teach language, practitioners assist students in valuing and preserving their family heritage.

REFERENCES

Brown, L. et al. (1984). *The discrepancy analysis technique in programs for students with severe handicaps.* (Manuscript written in cooperation with the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Madison Metropolitan School District).

Brown, L. et al. (1984). *Ecological inventory of strategies for students with severe handicaps.* (Manuscript written in cooperation with University of Wisconsin-Madison and Madison Metropolitan School District).

Duran, E., & Heiry, T. J. (1986). Comparison of Spanish only, Spanish and English and English only cues with handicapped students. *Reading Improvement, 23*(2), 138–141.

Gay, C. (1966). *Academic achievement and intelligence among Negro eighth grade students as a function of the self-concept.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, North Texas State University, Denton.

Lumpkin, D. (1959). *The relationship of self-concept to achievement in reading.* Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, Los Angeles.

Sailor, W., & Guess, D. (1983). *Severely handicapped: An instructional design.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

This digest is based on an article by Elva Durán, "Functional Language Instruction for the Handicapped or Linguistically Different Students," *Journal of Reading Improvement*, Vol. 25, no. 4, (1988): 265–268. A publication of Project Innovation, 1362 Santa Cruz Court, Chula Vista, CA 91910.

ERIC Digests are in the public domain and may be freely reproduced and disseminated.

This publication was prepared with funding from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under contract no. RI88062007. The opinions expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of OERI or the Department of Education.